

CALLIMACHUS' TWO AETIA PROLOGUES

Any consideration of Callimachus' poetic development must depend to a great extent on our interpretation of the two *Aetia* Prologues, *Against the Telchines* and *The Dream* (Pf. Fr. 1 et 2). These Prologues are more important for the student of Alexandrian literary than Callimachus' *Hymns* and *Epigrams*, even when the latter deal with literary opinions.¹ Firstly the two *Aetia* Prologues are undoubtedly programmatic. Secondly, they preface Callimachus' *chef d'oeuvre*, the *Aetia*. For this reason they occupy the most prominent place in Callimachus' most important work.

Turning our attention to the extant text, we notice that the first Prologue is directed against the invidious Telchines. It purports to be a counter-attack. The Telchines' initial attack is presumably the accusation that Callimachus has not achieved a unified poetic composition (ἄκτισμα διηγηκέας, a *carmen continuum*, or a *carmen perpetuum*) concerning kings and heroes written in many thousands of lines. In contrast, Callimachus is ὀλιγόστιχος. The poet defends himself by asserting that poetry (σοφία) must not be judged by its quantity (symbolized by the σχοῖνος Περσική or παρασάγγης) but by its quality. Thunder is the exclusive feature of Zeus, not of Callimachus, whom Apollo has counselled to keep the Muse lean (λεπταλέη). Callimachus has chosen for himself the untrodden way, the narrow path along which the wagons do not move. He sings like the shrill cicada; he does not bray like asses. It is the former, the winged one (πτερόεις) which delicately feeds on the dew. Such a poet, he hopes, will in his age not be abandoned by the Muses.

The Florentine Scholia which seem to date from the 2nd Century² and which appear to have constituted the first page of a lost volume containing Epaphroditus' entire comments on the *Aetia*³, or at least

¹ The conclusion of the *Hymn to Apollo* contains a problematic attack on unnamed writers whose lengthy poems are literally said to be full of „turgid trash“ like the „great Assyrian river.“ Pf. Epig. 7 contains a cryptic reference to Homer, Pf. Epig. 27 enthusiastically supports Aratus and the „Hesiodic“ *tropos*, Pf. Epig. 28 censures the commonplace „cyclic“ epic, while Pf. Epig. 52 is addressed to Theocritus.

² L. Torraca, *Il prologo dei Telchini e l'inizio degli Aitia di Callimaco* (Napoli, 1969,) pp. 16—19.

³ G. Coppola, „Il prologo degli Aitia ed il commento di Epaphroditos,“ *Rendiconti della reale Accademia delle scienze di Bologna*, Serie, Terza 7 (1932—33), pp. 30—55.

excerpta form his *Hypomnemata*,⁴ enumerate the Telchines as Asclepiades, Poseidippus and Praxiphanes. Unfortunately, the text is fragmentary at this point, and the names of the remaining Telchines are lost⁵. A remarkable feature of the Telchines is that none was an epic poet whose production ran into „many thousands of lines“⁶. On the contrary, two of them were elegiac poets whose work is known to us from the Palatine Anthology — a point which tends to diminish the argument that the *Aetia* Prologues are primarily directed against poets who did not specialize in *die dichterische Kleinmalerei* (as Gercke calls it).⁷ The point at issue may have been whether Antimachus or Philetas deserved the designation of *Mimnermus redivivus* in which the Telchines presumably supported the claim for Antimachus, while Callimachus threw his weight behind Philetas. It is thought on very slender evidence indeed that Apollonius was favorably disposed to Antimachus and that this reason alone justifies his inclusion in the ranks of the Telchines⁸.

Obviously any theory which insists on a Callimachean-Apollonian dispute will try to identify Apollonius as one of the Telchines. It was Rostagni, in fact, who went furthest in an effort to establish Apollonius as leader of the Βασκανίης ὄλοδον γένος. Accordingly, he stressed the Rhodian origin of the name Τελχῖνες and interpreted these *Callimachi obtrectatores*, or, as the Scholia call them, μεμφόμενοι αὐτοῦ [sc. Καλ.] τὸ κάτισχον τῶν ποιημάτων, as „i seguaci di Apollonio“ or οἱ περὶ τὸν Ἀπολλώνιον. In addition, Rostagni insisted on reading Apollonius' name into the lacuna of lines 10 and 11 of the Florentine Scholia.

Ingenious as is Rostagni's argument, his views have by now been rejected. In the first place, his judgment on the crucial significance of Praxiphanes in the literary environment of Alexandria can be shown to be in error. He had believed, mistakenly as we shall see, that Praxiphanes, a Peripatetic, had been an ally of Callimachus, a fellow Peripatetic⁹. Secondly, Apollonius cannot be called a Τελχῖν in fact, the Rhodian connotation of the word Τελχῖνες now appears to apply

⁴ For the qualifications of Coppola's theory made by Vitelli and Norsa, see Torraca, p. 19.

⁵ See the *Florentine Scholia* (lines 10—15), *Pf. Scholia ad Fr.* 1. 1—12.

⁶ Compare Envy's remark to Apollo in the *Hymn to Apollo* (line 106) that „ὄκ ἀγαμαι τὸν ἀοιδὸν ὅς οὐδ' ὕσα πόντος ἀοίδει“. See also n. 1.

⁷ A. Gercke, „Alexandrinische Studien,“ *RhM* 42 (1889), p. 130.

⁸ A. Rostagni, „Nuovo Callimaco,“ *Rivista di filologia e d'istruzione classica* (1928), pp. 1—5; R. Wyss, *Antimachi Colophonii reliquiae*, xix; A. P. Smotrytsch, „Zu Frage der literarischen Kritik im Prolog der Aitia des Kallimachos,“ *Miscellanea di studi alessandrini in memoria di Augusto Rostagni* (Torino 1963), p. 256; T. B. L. Webster, *Hellenistic Poetry and Art* (London, 1964), p. 106.

⁹ Rostagni's „Aristotele e Aristotelismo nella storia dell'estetica antica,“ *SIFC* N. S. 2 (1922) pp. 1—147, was proved incorrect by K. O. Brink's „Callimachus and Aristotle. An Inquiry into Callimachus' Ἦρδς Ἦρζζῆφάνην,“ *CQ* 40 (1946), pp. 11—26.

more fittingly to Praxiphanes than to Apollonius¹⁰. In addition, a more thorough examination of the Scholia by Vitelli and Norsa¹¹ reveals that Apollonius' name cannot be fitted into the lacuna without damage to the existing (precious) text¹². In short, Rostagni's signal failure to implicate Apollonius in the *lutte littéraire* against the Telchines tends to confirm Wehrli's conclusion: „The fact that the very well-informed commentator of the Floretine Papyrus (PSI XI 1219) does not mention Apollonius among the opponents, shows nothing less (*beweist nichts Geringeres*) than that a feud between the two poets was unknown to him“¹³. This opinion is shared by Erbse, who is, I believe, correct in maintaining that: „Der Kommentator habe also nur an die Gegner des Kallimachos gedacht, die z. Zt. der Erstaussgabe der *Aetia* literarisch tätig waren. Er müßte aber, trotz seiner bewundernswerten Akribie, den wesentlichen Charakter des Telchinedichtung erkannt haben“¹⁴.

The fact that the fragments of the *Aetia* appear to contain two Prologues, *In Telchinas* and the *Somnium* (*Pf. Cr.* 1 and 2), which has led to the belief that the former constitutes part of the *redazione finale* of the *Aetia* at its author's hand¹⁵, suggests to me that in considering Callimachus' literary development which produced the *Aetia* as we now have it, we should distinguish between two distinct poetic periods.

Conclusions

The conclusions I draw after studying the two *Aetia* Prologues are twofold:

1.) Apollonius is *not* mentioned by the Scholia as being one of the Telchines. Any attempt to classify Apollonius as one of the *Callimachi obtrectationes* can be supported only by the most tenuous of

¹⁰ In his book *Hellenistic Poetry and Art* (p. 106) Webster is more explicit: „To the ordinary reader Telchines suggested not only malice but Rhodes. Among the critics of the Scholiast's list only Praxiphanes can be called a Rhodian.“ This is all very well, but Webster is working in an area of pure fantasy when he continues: „Is it thinkable that he gave hospitality to Apollonius? He believed in long poetry. As a Peripatetic he would have approved of Antimachus, and Apollonius both used Antimachus and wrote on him“ p. 73. Apollonius used *both* Homer and Callimachus in his poem, two writers whose literary criteria were antithetical. T. S. Eliot wrote on Milton but did not approve of Milton's reaction against the Metaphysical poets. For Callimachus' $\Pi\rho\beta\varsigma \Pi\rho\alpha\zeta\iota\varphi\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\gamma\eta$ cf. *Pf. Fr.* 460.

¹¹ Cf. n. 4.

¹² Torraca, pp. 25—26.

¹³ F. Wehrli, „Apollonios von Rhodos und Kallimachos,“ *Hermes* 74 (1941), p. 18.

¹⁴ H. Erbse, „Zum Apollonhymnos des Kallimachos,“ *Hermes* 83 (1955), p. 428, n. 4.

¹⁵ G. Capovilla, *Callimaco*, I, p. 220. This constituted Torraca's *Hauptthese*. This thesis is in *no* way invalidated by the argument that strictly speaking only the *Somnium* is the *Aetia's* Prologue, since the *In Telchinas* is a Prologue to the complete Callimachean *ouvrage* including *inter alia* the *Iambi* and the *Hecale*.

arguments¹⁶. Webster's attempt (see fns. 8 and 10) to see in Apollonius a supporter of the Telchines [(a) because there is a „Rhodian-ring“ to the „Telchines,“ (b) because Apollonius *may* have been entertained by Praxiphanes during his „exile“ at Rhodes, (c) because Apollonius makes use of Antimachus' *Lyde*] is very *unconvincing*. Equally unconvincing is Pfeiffer's argument which implies that Apollonius can be implicated in the Telchines' attack on Callimachus because both Praxiphanes and Apollonius were Peripatetics and so literary „conservatives“ who favored „organic“ epic to Callimachus' „New Poetry“¹⁷. There is not a vestige of evidence to support Pfeiffer's contention that Apollonius' *Argonautica* was written according to Aristotelian principles. It is true, as everyone knows, that Aristotle in his *Poetics* favors not only „organic“ but also „cohesive“ writing in general. But all epic need not be „organic“ (even Aristotle would have admitted this), and certainly the *Argonautica*, with its manifold digressions and overriding aetiological interest, is *not* „organic“. In fact these characteristics of the *Argonautica* make it a sister-*genre* to the *Aetia* itself, rather than to the Homeric epics. This point was brilliantly made by Fritz Wehrli whom Pfeiffer would have done well to heed¹⁸. Wehrli discounted the theory of a literary feud between Callimachus and Apollonius, which he considered to be nothing but a grammarian's fiction (see n. 13). In addition, Wehrli raised important arguments to show that the *Argonautica* cannot be construed as a denial or rebuttal of Callimachean poetic canons, but is rather the extension of them.

Pfeiffer is of course aware of the difficulties involved in classifying Apollonius as a Peripatetic or literary „reactionary“ along with Praxiphanes. He feels himself — understandably — in hot water, and so he resorts to a hypothetical argument. He claims that Apollonius' lost Περὶ Ἀρχιλόχου „was an important link with the Peripatetics“. Pfeiffer continues: „... in this connection (apropos Apollonius' lost Περὶ Ἀρχιλόχου), Apollonius seems to have followed a more traditional line than Zenodotus and Callimachus“¹⁹. Unfortunately, how-

¹⁶ See especially the two *vitae* on Apollonius in C. Wendel's *Scholia in Apollonium Rhodium vetera* (Berlin, 1958), pp. 1—2. In the first *vita* we are told that Apollonius, far from belonging to a rival („conservative“) literary faction, was Καλλιμαχίου μαθητής, and in the second *vita* that Apollonius ἐμαθήτευσσε Καλλιμάχῳ. Nothing is said of a quarrel between the two in the two lives. So too P. Händel's „Die zwei Versionen der Viten des Apollonios Rhodios,“ *Hermes* 90 (1962), pp. 429—443, A. Köhnken's *Apollonios Rhodios und Theokrit: Die Hylas- und Amykosgedichten beider Dichter*, Hypomnemata 12 (Göttingen, 1965), p. 14, D. N. Levin's „Apolloniana Minora,“ *TAPA* 93 (1962), p. 160. H. Herter, on the other hand, held that the *vitae*, contrary to appearances, support the idea of a bitter controversy (*tiefe Zerwürfnis*) between the two poets. See his „Zur Lebensgeschichte des Apollonios von Rhodos,“ *RhM* 91 (1942), p. 312. Herter is following E. Delage's *Biographie d'Apollonios de Rhodes* (Paris, 1930).

¹⁷ R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford, 1968), p. 146.

¹⁸ Wehrli (see n. 13), pp. 14—21.

¹⁹ Pfeiffer, p. 146.

ever, the *Περὶ Ἀρχιγόχου* is lost; and we are to accept on faith, it seems, Pfeiffer's word for its contents. Pfeiffer's argument, technically speaking, is an *obscurum per obscurius*.

2.) The two *Aetia* Prologues represent two distinct stages in Callimachus' literary development. *The Dream*, as Torraca and Capovilla show (see n. 15), is the original Prologue to the *Aetia*. A later revision of the poem is responsible for the Prologue *Against the Telchines*. What these Italian scholars fail to comprehend is that there is a definite development of literary perspective as evidenced by the later Prologue. The earlier Prologue, in which the poet invokes Hesiod, represents his early break with poetry which he saw was characterized by „organic“ unity. Such poetry undoubtedly comprised imitations of Homeric epic or other poems which were written in a high-flown or pompous style (a style characterized by poetic *σεμνότης*). At this stage of his literary career, Callimachus had turned to the „Hesiodic mode“ which comprises elegy and poetic aetiology. The controversy is between „Homeric“ and „Hesiodic“ poetic composition.

In the later Prologue, *Against the Telchines*, Callimachus is attacking poets writing within the elegiac tradition itself *i.e.* within the „Hesiodic“ *tropos*. Only in Callimachus' second poetic period could the question have emerged of whether Antimachus or Philetas merited the title of *Mimnermus redivivus*. An increasing anti-„Homeric“ orientation marks the development from the earlier to the later *Aetia* Prologue. The poet has become increasingly intolerant of „Homeric“ gravity (*σεμνότης*) and more ardent in his advocacy of Alexandrian „lightness of touch“ or *λεπτότης*. In fact the poets' devotion to poetic *λεπτότης* had brought him into violent conflict with other elegiac poets (Asclepiades and Poseidippus), poets whom he may well have supported when he wrote his earlier *Aetia* Prologue. Such a poetic development is characterized by an increasingly alienated attitude. Callimachus' reaction against the polis-oriented concept of classical art has become sharper. The literary innovator has become the literary radical.

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